

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

Claims 2 and 6 have been amended to overcome the rejections under 35 USC §112, second paragraph.

Claims 1-3 and 5-8 have been rejected under 35 USC §103 (a) as being unpatentable over Shibata et al. and Haland et al.

It is respectfully submitted that to establish obviousness of a claimed invention, the prior art reference or references when combined must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. In addition, there must be some suggestion or motivation to a person having ordinary skill in the art to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings (MPEP §706.02(j)).

Claim 1 has been amended to add the feature that the lining pieces are displaceable in a longitudinal direction of the lining pieces with respect to each other (specification page 4 line 25 and 26).

The combination of Shibata and Haland et al. does not disclose or suggest that the lining being comprised of at least two lining pieces which together with the gas bag module form a preassembled unit and which before a final installation of the unit in the vehicle are displaceable with respect to each other.

Shibata discloses an assembly of a folded gas bag package, a gas generator and a roof lining, in which the gas

bag package 25 is mounted to a carrier plate 11, and two lining pieces 20, 21 are pivotally mounted via hinges 13 to the carrier plate 11. This assembly is installed in a vehicle, wherein in a last mounting step the lining pieces 20, 21 are pivoted downwards to cover the airbag package. However, as the lining pieces are fixedly connected to the carrier plate, they cannot be moved relative to each other in a longitudinal direction along the roof frame or along the carrier plate 11, which coincides with the longitudinal direction of the lining pieces in a closed condition.

The patent to Haland shows a gas bag extending from an A-column to a C-column. No displaceable lining pieces are disclosed in this document at all.

The present invention provides the advantage of allowing an adjustment of the lining pieces in longitudinal direction and an adaptation of their position in relation to the roof frame to the design of the vehicle. By moving the lining pieces in longitudinal direction relative to each other, the position of the lining pieces can, for instance, be adjusted to slightly different positions of the handles in different vehicle types. Further, tolerances can be equalized.

Thus, claim 1 should be allowable.

Claims 2-6 depend from claim 1 and define over the prior art for the same reasons as claim 1 and for the specific limitations recited therein. Regarding claim 2, neither Haland et al. nor Shibata et al. disclose or suggest that the lining, when installed in the vehicle, is divided into the two lining pieces in a region of a B-column of the vehicle and

including all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, claim 2 should be allowable.

Regarding claim 3, neither Haland et al. nor Shibata et al. disclose or suggest that the two lining pieces, when installed in the vehicle and as viewed in the direction of a longitudinal axis of the lining pieces, are spaced apart from each other and including all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, claim 3 should be allowable.

Regarding claim 4, neither Haland et al. nor Shibata et al. disclose or suggest that fastening means are provided, with which both the lining pieces and the gas bag are permanently installed in the vehicle and including all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, claim 4 should be allowable.

Regarding claim 5, neither Haland et al. nor Shibata et al. disclose or suggest that the gas bag module has a gas generator which is part of the preassembled unit and including all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, claim 5 should be allowable.

Regarding claim 6, neither Haland et al. nor Shibata et al. disclose or suggest that the gas generator is arranged in the region of a B-column when the unit is installed in the vehicle and including all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, claim 6 should be allowable.

Regarding claim 9, none of the prior art, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest two lining pieces having opposing, longitudinal ends, which when installed in the vehicle and as viewed in the direction of a longitudinal axis of the lining pieces, are spaced apart from each other.

Regarding claim 10, none of the prior art, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest that the two lining pieces, when installed in the vehicle, have longitudinal ends overlapping each other.

Regarding claims 9 and 10, the patent to Shibata shows only lining pieces firmly attached via hinges to a one-piece carrier plate. No adjustment of the positions of the lining pieces relative to each other in a longitudinal direction is provided or suggested.

Regarding claim 11, none of the prior art, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest an assembly comprising two lining pieces of a vehicle interior lining for a roof frame and a gas bag folded to an elongated package connected to the lining pieces, the gas bag, in a state installed in a vehicle, extending substantially from an A-column of the vehicle to a C-column of the vehicle, the two lining pieces, in a state not installed in the vehicle, being connected with each other via the gas bag package only.

The patent to Shibata shows that the gas bag package mounted to the carrier plate 11 on which are also attached the lining pieces 20, 21.

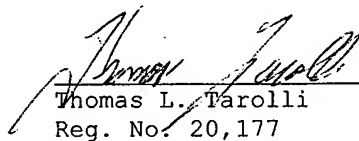
Contrary to this assembly, in the assembly according to the invention the lining pieces are connected only by the gas bag in the installed state in the vehicle. The assembly according to the invention allows to move the lining pieces relative to each other in a longitudinal direction before mounting the assembly to a vehicle and also allows to fold back the lining pieces onto each other to reduce the length of

the assembly for transport or storing. None of this is possible with an assembly as disclosed by Shibata.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, and allowance of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,


Thomas L. Tarolli
Reg. No. 20,177

TAROLLI, SUNDHEIM, COVELL,
& TUMMINO L.L.P.
526 Superior Avenue, Suite 1111
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-1400
Phone: (216) 621-2234
Fax: (216) 621-4072
Customer No.: 26,294